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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 003178

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [ICRC](#) [MDA](#)

SUBJECT: MDA: SWISS PROJECT DIRECTOR PFIRTER'S  
CONSULTATIONS WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS ON THIRD PROTOCOL  
CONFERENCE AND EMBLEM ISSUE

REF: A. BERN 630 (NOTAL)

[B](#). STATE 71261 (NOTAL)

[C](#). CAIRO 2875

[D](#). GENEVA 811 (NOTAL)

[E](#). CAIRO 2515

Classified by Charge Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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[1](#). (C) During a two-day visit to Egypt April 20-21, Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Coordinator Didier Pfirter met with senior Egyptian and Arab League officials to discuss the Magen David Adom (MDA) and Third Protocol issues.

During the meetings, the Egyptian MFA expressed concerns over the timing of Swiss efforts absent greater progress on the Roadmap and absent (unspecified) gestures from the Israeli side toward the Palestinians. Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa was categorically unhelpful, while Presidential advisor Osama El Baz was sympathetic but similarly concerned over timing of the Swiss initiative. Poloff encouraged the Swiss to keep up the pressure; post will continue to do the same. End summary.

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Swiss Policy Coordinator on Regional Tour  
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[2](#). (C) Swiss Government Policy Coordinator on the MDA issue Didier Pfirter, during an introductory visit to Cairo April 20-21, met with Egyptian MFA Assistant Minister Ahmed Fathallah, Chief of the MFA Cabinet Sameh Shukry, Presidential Advisor Osama El Baz, Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa, and Red Crescent Secretary General Mamduh Gabr. According to Swiss Embassy poloff Peter Nelson, the general GOE reaction to Pfirter's presentation ranged between cautious and negative. Pfirter, he said, described three policy options open to the international community on the MDA issue: one, a six-month fast-track approach to complete the entire process of bringing the MDA into the Movement; two, maintenance of the status quo with blame directed toward the Arab governments for not moving, and; three, removing some of the urgency surrounding the issue by seeking commitments by state parties to move forward over the coming two years in return for abandoning the fast-track approach. The last of these three options is Egypt's preferred choice, according to Nelson.

[3](#). (C) Assistant Minister Fathallah reportedly expressed to Pfirter his doubts about moving forward with the Third Protocol and MDA issues, noting that the situation on the ground in the occupied territories had not changed significantly for the Palestinians. While there was currently a lull in fighting and violence, Fathallah reportedly conveyed, the situation is fluid and can easily take a turn for the worse. Nevertheless, the GOE was currently consulting with other Arab and Muslim governments and trying to reach a consensus position on the subject. Fathallah recommended that Pfirter continue to engage and work with these delegations in Geneva. MFA Chief of Cabinet Sameh Shukry similarly expressed skepticism on the timing of the Swiss initiative, suggesting that the "fast-track" timetable being discussed was too ambitious. Geneva's hosting of a diplomatic conference on the Third Protocol in October, as suggested, was too early for Cairo and other Arab states. Similarly, Presidential Advisor Osama El Baz expressed sympathy for solving the problem but revealed concerns over the timing of the Swiss efforts. It would be difficult for Arab governments to make conciliatory gestures to Israel such as this one, the Egyptians argued, absent better news regarding cessation of settlement and security barrier construction by Israel and the improvement of the humanitarian situation for Palestinians in the territories. Red Crescent Secretary General Gabr was sympathetic to resolving the MDA issue but recognized that state parties alone would determine the success or failure of these efforts.

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Bringing the Egyptians on Board  
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14. (C) While Egyptian caution on the MDA issue was entirely expected, poloff encouraged his Swiss counterpart to keep up the pressure. Post will do the same, taking advantage of upcoming meetings with senior GOE officials to make clear that the MDA issue is a high priority to the USG.

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CORBIN